



An ACE Magazine K

Challenge OF THE UNKNOWN

10¢

SEPTEMBER

VILLA OF THE VAMPIRE
HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE
SNAKE PEOPLE
and other strange stories

ID

HAVE A SLIMMER, YOUTHFUL, FEMININE APPEARANCE INSTANTLY! REDUCE



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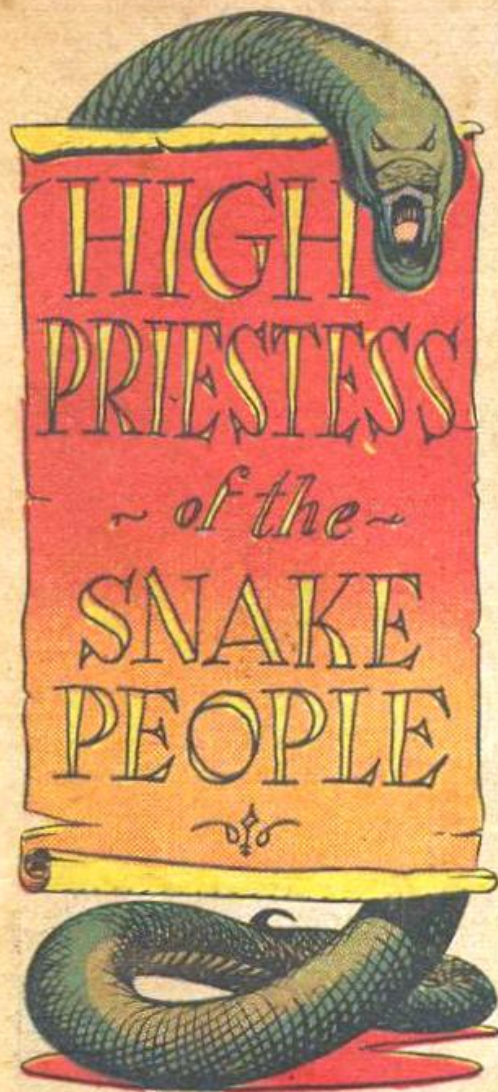
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I understand if not delighted with the UP-LIFT ADJUST-O-BELT I can return it in 10 days for full purchase price refund.

SENT ON APPROVAL!



"THE INSTANT I ENTERED THE TINY SWISS TOBACCO SHOP, I WAS SEIZED BY A STRANGE AND UNEXPLAINABLE SENSE OF DANGER. WAS IT BECAUSE OF THE BURNING LOOK IN THE OLD WOMAN'S EYES, OR WAS IT THE CHOKING SMELL OF DECAY AND AGE THAT BROUGHT FRIGHT TO MY HEART? HERE, IN THIS SHOP, THE FIRST LINK IN THE CHAIN OF TERROR WAS FORGED-- TO TRANSPLANT ME INTO A WORLD OF SUCH LOATHESOME HORROR, OF SUCH UNFORGETTABLE AND SINISTER FORCES, THAT DEATH ITSELF WOULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER FATE THAN ITS LIVING MEMORY!"



"SHE SEEMED TO GLIDE TOWARD ME, AND WHEN I LOOKED INTO HER FACE, I COULD SEE THE GREEN DEPTH OF HER EYES BENEATH THE LONG SWEEP OF HER LASHES. HER BEAUTY WAS INTOXICATING..."

ZELLMOTT IS DIFFERENT! YOU WILL FIND IT THE MOST EXCITING EXPERIENCE OF YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!

I-- I DON'T KNOW. MY PLANS CALLED FOR...



THEN FORGET YOUR PLANS. TONIGHT YOUR TRAIN WILL PASS AN OLD TOWER ATOP A STEEP HILL. ZELLMOTT LIES JUST BEYOND. YOU WILL GO THERE!

I-- I'M NOT SURE...



"IN WHAT SEEMED A HALF TRANCE I SLOWLY BACKED OUT OF THE SHOP, THE GIRL'S HAUNTING EYES NEVER LEAVING MINE. BUT WHEN I WAS OUTSIDE..."



WHY, IT'S A PACKAGE OF TOBACCO-- SHE PUT IT IN MY HAND, AND I HAVEN'T PAID FOR IT!

THE DOOR IS LOCKED! WAIT... THAT SIGN! IT CAN'T BE!



"BEWILDERED AND SHOCKED, I LOOKED THROUGH THE WINDOW. I WAS AWARE OF AN IMMEDIATE CHANGE. THE GIRL AND THE OLD WOMAN WERE GONE, AND SO WERE THE WEIRD AND GROTESQUE FURNISHINGS. THEN, A REVOLTING HORROR LOOMED BEFORE MY EYES!"



THAT SNAKE! IT'S ALIVE!

"I FLED IN TERROR, THE LOATHESOME SPECTACLE PLUNGING MY THOUGHTS INTO ABYSSAL DEPTHS OF HORROR AND WILD PANIC. YET, THAT VERY SAME EVENING, AS MY TRAIN ROUNDED A LONG, SWEEPING TURN, I SAW IT..."



IT'S THE TOWER GILDA SPOKE OF-- AND THE MOUNTAIN! IT'S MAGNIFICENT!

"PERHAPS IT WAS THE PECULIAR AROMA OF THE TOBACCO THAT GILDA GAVE ME THAT MADE ME BEHAVE IN SO STRANGE AND SUDDEN A MANNER. I CAN OFFER NO EXPLANATION FOR MY ACTION, BUT A SHARP AND IRRESISTIBLE IMPULSE COMPELLED ME TO GET OFF THAT TRAIN..."



"WHETHER IT WAS HYPNOSIS OR THE DEVIL'S POWER ITSELF, I DON'T KNOW-- MY LEGS CARRIED ME FORWARD WITHOUT MY KNOWING HOW OR WHY. THEN I WAS IN THE VILLAGE, MY BOOTS STRIKING NOISILY AGAINST THE COBBLESTONES."

THERE'S A LIGHT IN THAT INN. THIS PLACE IS ENOUGH TO GIVE A MAN THE CREEPS!



GILDA!



"I ENTERED THE INN AND..."

YOU!

WELCOME, YOUNG MAN. WELCOME TO THE VILLAGE OF ZELMOTT!



"MY MIND WAS SO CONFUSED BY THE STRANGE COURSE OF EVENTS, THAT I WANTED TO FLEE. BUT FLIGHT WAS IMPOSSIBLE WHEN I HEARD GILDA'S VOICE. IT FELL UPON MY EARS LIKE THE TINKLING OF A TINY SILVER BELL, CARESSING AND OVERPOWERING IN ITS SWEETNESS..."

YOU ARE NOT UNHAPPY TO FIND ME HERE, ARE YOU? WE WISH ONLY TO MAKE YOUR STAY HERE MORE COMFORTABLE. YOUR ROOM IS WAITING, HERR...?

MY NAME IS MICHAEL CORNING-- AND I W--WILL STAY.



"DUMBLY, I FOLLOWED THE BEWITCHING GILDA FROM THE ROOM. AS WE CAME TO THE STAIRWAY, I HEARD A SOUND AT MY FEET. WHEN I LOOKED DOWN, A CRY OF HORROR SPRANG TO MY LIPS, AND..."

LOOK OUT!



LET ME GO, GILDA! I CAN STILL KILL IT!

NO, YOU MUSTN'T! IT MEANT NO HARM!



"A MOMENT LATER, THE OLD CRONE EMERGED FROM THE ROOM WHICH THE SNAKE HAD ENTERED. HER RAGE WAS TERRIFYING, BUT EVEN MORE SO WAS THE LIVID WELT ACROSS HER CHEEK!"

IN ZELMOTT WE DO NOT HARM SNAKES, HERR CORNING-- NEVER!

HE MEANT NO HARM BY IT. LEAVE US ALONE!



"WITH A FINAL SAVAGE GLANCE, THE OLD CRONE LEFT. THEN, AT THE DOOR OF MY ROOM, MY PANICKY STATE WAS PARTIALLY QUIETED BY GILDA'S HAUNTING SMILE AND GENTLE VOICE..."

DO NOT BECOME ALARMED BY MY MOTHER'S ANGER. SHE DETESTS CRUELTY AGAINST ALL CREATURES-- EVEN SNAKES!

BUT WAS IT A SNAKE, GILDA?



OF COURSE, MICHAEL-- WHAT ELSE? COME NOW, AFTER A NIGHT'S REST YOU WILL HAVE FORGOTTEN IT. GOOD NIGHT, AND SLEEP WELL!

ALL RIGHT, GILDA. I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.



"WHEN MORNING CAME..."

WHAT SORT OF VILLAGE IS THIS, GILDA? I HAVE SEEN NO PEOPLE, AND LAST NIGHT...

NO QUESTIONS NOW, MICHAEL! GO TO THE MOUNTAIN. NEAR ITS PEAK YOU WILL FIND A CAVERN. I WILL MEET YOU THERE LATER, AND EXPLAIN ALL.



"SOMEHOW, HER WORDS WERE LIKE A COMMAND-- A COMMAND I FELT IMPELLED TO OBEY. ALL THAT MORNING I STRUGGLED UP THE STEEP SLOPES, AND WITH EVERY STEP IT SEEMED AS THOUGH I COULD HEAR GILDA'S HAUNTING VOICE CALLING TO ME FROM ABOVE, URGING ME ON..."



THE CAVERN AT LAST! SHE MUST BE INSIDE, WAITING FOR ME!

"THE MOMENT I ENTERED, I WAS SEIZED BY A PARALYZING FEAR, AND THEN I SAW THE UNSPEAKABLE HORROR WHICH TORE THE SINGLE WORD FROM MY LIPS!"

GILDA!

WE HAVE AWAITED YOUR ARRIVAL, MICHAEL. NOW YOU SHALL LEARN THE ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS!



"HALF CRAZED WITH TERROR, I TURNED TO FLEE!"

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE, MICHAEL CORNING! WE CLAIM YOU AS ONE OF US!



A.R.R.G.H!



"WITH MY FINAL STRENGTH I BROKE FREE FROM THE REPULSIVE JAWS, AND FLEEING THE CAVERN, I HALF RAN, HALF SLID DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SIDE. HOURS LATER I REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS..."

THAT SNAKE BIT ME!
GOT TO FIND HELP--
FAST!



MAYBE IT ISN'T TOO LATE. JUST A LITTLE MORE TO GO-- GOT TO HOLD ON-- GOT TO!



SOMETHING ATTACKED ME ON THE MOUNTAIN-- A SNAKE-- CALL A DOCTOR!

NO DOCTOR CAN CURE YOU!



THIS IS NOT THE BITE FROM AN ORDINARY SNAKE. THE THING THAT ATTACKED YOU WAS FAR MORE LOATHESOME! AM I NOT RIGHT?

YES-- IT WAS
HIDEOUS!



YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF THE GREATEST EVIL EVER BROUGHT UPON MAN-- THE ANCIENT SNAKE WORSHIPPERS OF ZELMOTT HAVE PLACED THEIR MARK UPON YOU!

SNAKE WORSHIPPERS?



"THE OLD MAN SWEEPED BACK THE COVERS ON A BED. I WAS HORRIFIED!"

MY SON! BITTEN, AS YOU, ONLY TWO WEEKS AGO!



TIME IS SHORT. MY SON IS FAR GONE, BUT IF YOU ARE TO SPARE YOURSELF THIS HORRIBLE FATE, WE MUST ACT QUICKLY. TOGETHER WE MAY STILL DESTROY THIS EVIL-- BUT WE MUST HURRY!

OF COURSE...
I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU SAY!



"TAKING A SMALL PACKAGE FROM THE CABIN, THE OLD MAN LED THE WAY. LATER WHEN WE ENTERED A PASSAGE IN THE MOUNTAIN'S BASE, A FEELING OF HORROR ROSE WITHIN ME."



I DISCOVERED THIS PASSAGE BY CHANCE RECENTLY. IT LEADS TO THEIR MEETING PLACE!

"AT THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS, A GRUESOME SIGHT SPRANG INTO VIEW..."



THE ONE ON THE THRONE -- SHE IS THE LEADER. THE OTHERS ARE PAST VICTIMS OF HER HIDEOUS EVIL. WE MUST ACT QUICKLY!

MICHAEL CORNING, BLOOD OF OUR BLOOD, STEP FORWARD! I SENSE YOUR PRESENCE AMONGST US, AND THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPE. COME, MICHAEL, COME...



"PERHAPS IT WAS THEIR VENOM FLOWING IN MY VEINS WHICH MADE ME INCAPABLE OF RESISTING HER CALL. I WALKED TOWARD HER, DRAWN TO HER EVIL BEAUTY AS A MOTH TO A FLICKERING FLAME..."



WAIT, MY SON! RESIST -- WAIT!

"THEN THE OLD MAN WAS AT MY SIDE, TEARING AT HIS PACKAGE, AND A MOMENT LATER A SPLUTTERING BUNDLE WAS HURLED AT THE SPITTING, WRITHING MASS..."



DIE, YOU MONSTROUS FIENDS!



"IN ONE DEAFENING BLAST THE CAVERN FLOOR SPLIT OPEN, AND A MOMENT LATER, PIERCING SCREAMS BROKE LOOSE AS THE SNAKE CREATURES TUMBLED FORWARD INTO A BOILING WELL OF SULPHUROUS LIQUID!"



"I SAW GILDA, HER BODY A MASS OF SNAKE-LIKE SCALES, SUBMERGE INTO THE BUBBLING SULPHUR PIT!"



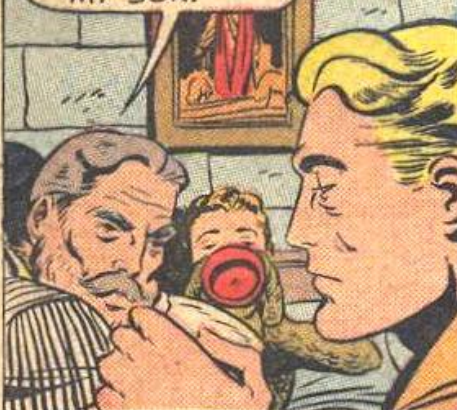
"TEARING MY EYES AWAY FROM THIS LAST AND FINAL HORROR, I FOLLOWED THE OLD MAN DOWN THE PASSAGEWAY AND OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN..."

WE MUST HURRY! EVERY MOMENT WE LOSE, THEIR VENOM MIXES FURTHER WITH YOUR BLOOD! BUT THERE MAY STILL BE A WAY OF SAVING YOU, AS WELL AS MY SON!



"UNKNOWN TO ME, THE OLD MAN HAD SCOOPED UP A FLASK OF THE BUBBLING LIQUID FROM THE SULPHUROUS WELL..."

SINCE THIS LIQUID WAS ABLE TO DESTROY THEIR EVIL, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT A SMALL DOSAGE WILL DESTROY THEIR VENOM WHICH STILL FLOWS IN YOUR VEINS. WE SHOULD KNOW IN A FEW DAYS! DRINK IT, MY SON!



"THE EXPERIMENT WAS SUCCESSFUL, AND AS I PREPARED TO LEAVE A WEEK LATER, BOTH HIS SON AND I HAD FULLY RECOVERED. THEN, THE OLD MAN SPOKE OF THE VILLAGE..."

ACTUALLY, THE VILLAGE OF ZELMOTT HAS BEEN DESERTED FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS, EVER SINCE SOME OF ITS INHABITANTS HAD BEEN BURNED AT THE STAKE FOR WITCHCRAFT AND SNAKE WORSHIP!



LET US HOPE THEIR EVIL HAS BEEN DESTROYED FOR ALWAYS!

"BEFORE RETURNING TO THE STATES, I WAS DETERMINED TO GO BACK TO THE TOBACCO SHOP FOR A LAST LOOK. I DIDN'T REALLY EXPECT THE OWNER TO BELIEVE MY STORY..."

IT'S FANTASTIC! BESIDES, I WAS CLOSED. YOU SAW THE SIGN! YES, I KNOW I'D HARDLY RECOGNIZE THIS SHOP NOW, BUT IT DID HAPPEN. THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN HERE, AND...



I SEE THAT SNAKE HAS CAUGHT YOUR EYE. MY SON FOUND IT THE OTHER DAY ON A HIKING TRIP NEAR THE DESERTED VILLAGE OF ZELMOTT. IF YOU'D LIKE TO BUY IT...



THAT BRUISE ON ITS HEAD!

YES! AT ANY PRICE!

"THAT NIGHT, ALONE IN MY ROOM, I THREW THE CURSED THING INTO THE FLAMES..."



NOW MY ONLY HOPE AND PRAYER IS THAT I HAVE DESTROYED THE LAST OF THE SNAKE WORSHIPERS. BUT WHAT IF THERE ARE STILL OTHERS WAITING FOR SOME INNOCENT CUSTOMER IN AN OUT OF THE WAY SHOP? WHAT THEN?



The END

TRUE TALES of the SUPERNATURAL

#1

IN THE SUMMER OF 1842, THE YOUNG EARL BROUGHT HIS NEW BRIDE TO THE FAMILY CASTLE WHICH HE HAD JUST INHERITED IN SCOTLAND...



THIS IS YOUR NEW HOME, MY DARLING. WE'LL HAVE A LIFETIME OF HAPPINESS IN THIS OLD CASTLE!

IT'S BEAUTIFUL, MY LOVE!

AMONG A CERTAIN NOBLE FAMILY OF SCOTLAND, THERE WAS A LEGEND THAT IF THE ELDEST MALE IN THE FAMILY SHOULD HEAR THE SOUND OF UNSEEN DRUMS, A TRAGIC DEATH HAD SURELY OCCURRED AT THE SAME MOMENT TO SOMEONE IN THE FAMILY. THE YOUNG EARL OF CLEVES WHO INHERITED THE FAMILY CASTLE IN 1842, HAD OFTEN SCOFFED AT THE LEGEND AS FANTASTICALLY UNTRUE!

A MONTH LATER, THE YOUNG EARL LEFT HIS LOVELY BRIDE AT HOME, DEPARTING ON A BUSINESS TRIP TO LONDON, WHERE HE ALSO CALLED ON AN OLD FAMILY FRIEND...



WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO RETURN TO SCOTLAND?

TOMORROW, AS SOON AS I COMPLETE MY BUSINESS HERE IN LONDON. OH, SAY, WHAT'S THE OCCASION FOR THE PARADE OUTSIDE. I HEAR DRUMS BEATING.

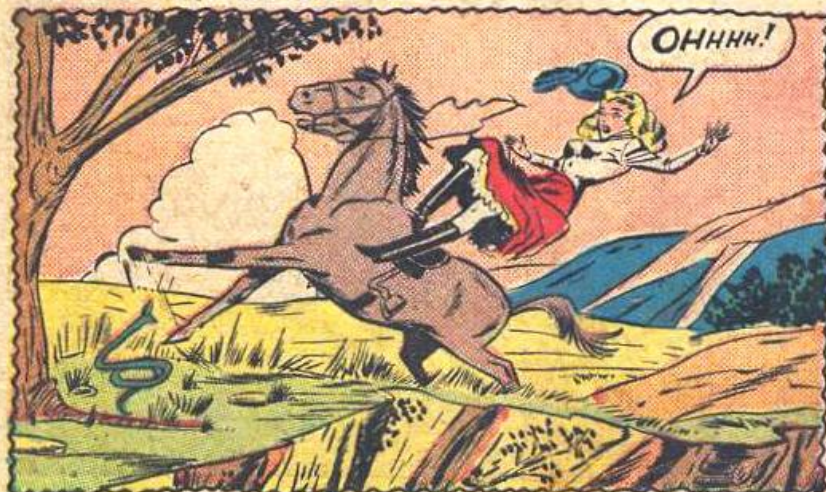
DRUMS? I HEAR NO DRUMS! NOR IS THERE A PARADE PASSING BY. GO SEE FOR YOURSELF!



NOT A SOUL IN SIGHT! YET I DO HEAR DRUMS BEATING! TH-THE FAMILY LEGEND! SOMEONE IN MY FAMILY HAS MET A TRAGIC DEATH! C-COULD IT BE...?



THE EARL HASTENED BACK TO SCOTLAND. HE ARRIVED THE NEXT DAY, ONLY TO FIND THAT HIS BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BRIDE HAD BEEN THROWN FROM HER HORSE THE DAY BEFORE, AND KILLED INSTANTLY IN THE RAVINE BELOW!



...AND THE EARL HAD HEARD THOSE DRUM-BEATS IN LONDON AT EXACTLY THE VERY SAME MOMENT THAT HIS BRIDE HAD BEEN KILLED IN FAR OFF SCOTLAND!

SO THE LEGEND IS TRUE! BUT WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE YOU? MY POOR DARLING?



BUT CAN THIS BE TRUE, OR WAS IT ONLY A FIGMENT OF THE EARL'S IMAGINATION? WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE, READERS?

THE END

THE GHOST IN THE PORTRAIT

SEE YON MANSION? IT SPEAKS OF PEACE AND HOME AND LOVE. BUT THERE IS A STORY IN THAT HOUSE, A STORY TO CURDLE YOUR BLOOD!



IN UGLY HATRED, A BURNING LUST FOR REVENGE, HIDDEN IN THE MUSTY DARKNESS OF A TRUNK IN AN ATTIC ROOM, FINDS RELEASE WHEN THE PORTRAIT OF A MAN LONG DEAD IS UNCOVERED. FOR THERE IS EVIL IN THE PAINTING, AND AWESOME HORROR FOLLOWS THE TRAIL OF THE GHOST IN THE PORTRAIT!

SEE THE GENTLE HILLS OF OUR NORTH ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE? IT IS THE KIND OF COUNTRY WHERE A BODY SHOULD FIND PEACE. BUT THAT WASN'T SO, FOR HERE, THERE WAS ONLY TERROR AND DEATH...



"ONCE, THIS MANSION WAS LONG UNOCCUPIED, EXCEPT BY ME, THE CARETAKER. BUT THERE WERE WELCOME VISITORS ONE SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON..."

WELCOME! WELCOME YOUNG MASTER AND MISTRESS!

YES, OF COURSE! I REMEMBER NOW YOU'RE JONATHAN. IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I SAW YOU. I WAS A CHILD THEN.





AYE. AND YOU'VE GROWN INTO A FINE MAN, PETER. YOU'RE YOUR FATHER'S SON TO THE IMAGE.

THANKS, JONATHAN. BUT NOW WE'RE TIRED. PLEASE SHOW US TO OUR ROOMS.



PETER, I-- I WISH YOU AND YOUR BRIDE WOULD NOT STAY IN THIS HOUSE. I CAN MAKE ARRANGEMENTS AT THE INN.

WHAT IS THIS NON-SENSE, JONATHAN? YOU KNOW WE INTEND TO LIVE HERE. THE HOUSE IS MINE. IT'S BEEN IN THE FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS.



'TIS AN EVIL HOUSE--ACCURSED! BUT YOU'RE YOUNG. YOU WON'T LISTEN. ONE THING, PETER. IN THE ATTIC IS AN OLD IRON TRUNK, SEALED WITH MELTED SILVER. DO NOT OPEN THIS TRUNK!

JONATHAN, JONATHAN... YOU'RE A FOOLISH OLD MAN! STOP PRATTLING, AND LET'S GO IN!



HOW DO YOU LIKE IT, MADELEINE?

I DON'T KNOW. I SUPPOSE I'LL GET USED TO THE PLACE.



"SO THEY MOVED INTO THE HOUSE, AND A FEW DAYS LATER..."

AH, HERE IT IS! THE TRUNK JONATHAN DESCRIBED. WELL, I'LL SOON FIND OUT THE MYSTERY OF THE LOCKED TRUNK. JONATHAN! OH, JONATHAN!



YOU CALLED ME, PETER? OH, YOU'VE FOUND IT! PLEASE, SIR, DON'T DISTURB THE TRUNK. LET IT STAY HERE WITH ITS CONTENTS!

YOU'VE WHETTED MY CURIOSITY, JONATHAN. NOTHING CAN KEEP ME FROM FINDING OUT WHAT'S IN IT. COME, MAN, GIVE ME A HAND CARRYING IT DOWNSTAIRS.



I'M OBEYING ORDERS, SIR. BUT IT'S AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT. THERE IS TERRIBLE EVIL LOCKED IN THIS TRUNK!

STOP IT NOW, JONATHAN... YOU'RE JUST REPEATING OLD WIVES' TALES. THERE'S NOTHING IN THIS TRUNK THAT CAN CAUSE ANYONE ANY TROUBLE.

"DESPITE MY ENTREATIES, THE MASTER OPENED THE TRUNK IN THE LIBRARY..."

I BEG OF YOU, SIR, DON'T OPEN THE TRUNK!

IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT, JONATHAN. IT'S OPEN, AS YOU CAN SEE. NOW, TO LEARN WHAT'S IN HERE-- WHAT THIS TERRIBLE "EVIL" IS...



WHY-- WHY, PETER--THE PORTRAIT LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE YOU!

YES, SO IT DOES!

AYE. 'TIS THE PORTRAIT OF YOUR GREAT GRANDFATHER, PETER WARREN, THE FIRST.



SIR, DON'T HANG THE PORTRAIT. IT WILL BRING EVIL ON YOU. IT IS ACCURSED.

LISTEN TO HIM, PETER. THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE PORTRAIT. THE EYES-- I'M AFRAID! AND THIS OLD HOUSE...

NONSENSE! DON'T BE A SILLY LITTLE GOOSE, DARLING! NOTHING CAN HURT US. WE'RE IN LOVE, AND WE HAVE YEARS OF HAPPINESS BEFORE US.



"IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, THE PORTRAIT WAS LIKE A MAGNET TO YOUNG PETER. HE WOULD SPEND HOURS STARING AT IT. AYE, AND TALKING TO IT."

WHAT LIES BEHIND YOUR EYES? IT IS AS THOUGH YOU ARE TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING. TELL ME YOUR SECRET. SPEAK-- TELL ME YOUR SECRET!



"THEN CAME THAT FIRST AWFUL NIGHT..."

WHO-- WHO ARE YOU?

YOUR GREAT GRANDFATHER'S GHOST, PETER!



THANKS TO YOU, I'VE FOUND RELEASE. WHEN YOU TOOK THE TRUNK, AND BROKE THE SEAL OF MELTED SILVER, AND REMOVED MY PORTRAIT, YOU FREED ME-- TO TAKE MY REVENGE!



WHERE ARE YOU GOING? WHAT KIND OF REVENGE?

I SHALL PAY BACK THE JURY THAT CONVICTED ME TO BE HANGED WHEN I KILLED MY WIFE IN A FIT OF ANGER. I SHALL TEAR OPEN THEIR GRAVES AND DISTURB THEIR SOULS BY SCATTERING THEIR BONES! THAT IS MY FIRST ACT, NOW THAT I AM FREE!



"AND THUS THE EVIL GHOST WENT ON HIS GHOULISH MISSION. I WAS PASSING THE CEMETERY THAT NIGHT, AND SAW ALL!"

THOSE FOOLS WHO CON-
DEMNED ME SHALL PAY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. THEY
HAVE RESTED WHILE I HAVE SUFFERED THE TORTURES
OF THE DAMNED, DOOMED TO THE TERRIBLE FATE OF
THOSE WHO DIE UNSHRIVEN!



THERE THEY LIE, IN THE QUIET CEMETERY
WHICH SHALL BE QUIET AND PEACEFUL
NO MORE!



THIS IS THE GRAVE OF ROGER
WATSON, WHO WAS THE FOREMAN
OF THE JURY. HE SHALL BE FIRST
TO FEEL MY WRATH!



HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE DISTURBED? YOU FOOL! DID
YOU THINK YOU COULD STRIKE DOWN PETER WARREN,
WITHOUT KNOWING THE WEIGHT OF MY VENGEANCE?



"THE SHADE OF PETER WARREN
FINISHED HIS FOUL TASK! HE
DESECRATED EACH GRAVE OF THE
JURYMEN WHO HAD SENT HIM TO
THE GALLOWS, SO MANY YEARS
BEFORE!"



"BUT AS THE FIRST TINGES OF
DAWN APPEARED IN THE EAST..."

THE DEED IS DONE! NOW I MUST
GO BACK. FOR I CAN WANDER
ONLY BEFORE THE LIGHT OF
MORNING. BACK TO THE
CANVAS THAT HOUSES
MY SPIRIT!



"AND WHILE PETER STILL
WATCHED, THE PHANTOM
RETURNED, HIS EVIL
SPIRIT ONCE MORE
ENSHROUDED IN HIS
CANVAS TOMB!"

IT'S TRUE! I HAVE NOT
BEEN DREAMING!



"I TOLD PETER ABOUT THE DESECRATED GRAVES THE NEXT MORNING..."

PETER! TWELVE GRAVES HAVE BEEN DESECRATED IN THE VALLEY. YOU MUST TAKE DOWN THE PORTRAIT. I KNOW WHAT I AM SAYING. HANGING IT HAS RELEASED THE GHOST OF YOUR ANCESTOR.

GET OUT OF HERE, YOU OLD FOOL!

PETER, JONATHAN IS RIGHT. THE PORTRAIT IS EVIL!

THE PORTRAIT STAYS WHERE IT IS! I AM THE MASTER OF THIS HOUSE! I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS IN THE VALLEY!

OH-- PETER!

THE EVIL OF THE PORTRAIT HAS WORKED ON YOU. IT HAS CAST ITS SPELL, AND TRAPPED YOU.

GET AWAY FROM ME! LET ME ALONE!

"THAT NIGHT A WILD STORM BROKE FROM THE HILLS, AND WHILE GREAT BOLTS OF LIGHTNING RENDED THE SKY, PETER WARREN HELD A RENDEZVOUS WITH THE GHOST..."

CAN THIS ALL BE TRUE? CAN IT BE HAPPENING? OR ARE YOU A FIGMENT OF MY BRAIN? PERHAPS I AM ILL-- PERHAPS MY MIND HAS BEEN PLAYING TRICKS...

NO, I AM HERE. ALREADY I HAVE PAID BACK THE TWELVE OF THEM-- A DEBT THAT HAS BEEN LONG OUTSTANDING. BUT TONIGHT I SHALL FIND THE REST I HAVE SOUGHT FOR MANY YEARS...

I WAS A MURDERER AND WENT TO MY GRAVE UNSHRIVEN, CURSED TO ETERNAL IMPRISONMENT IN MY OWN PORTRAIT TO PONDER ON MY EVIL DEED, UNTIL...

... YES, UNTIL ONE OF MY OWN BLOOD HAS COMMITTED THE SAME KIND OF CRIME, AND DIED ON THE GALLOWS AS I DID!





NO, PETER! I LOVE YOU! OH, MY DARLING, LISTEN TO ME! I LOVE YOU!

HA! HA! HA! CRINGE, BEG, PRAY-- IT WILL DO YOU NO GOOD! HE WILL OBEY ONLY ME!



"BUT AS THOUGH SOME POWERFUL, SUPERNATURAL FORCE WANTED TO DEFEAT THE FIENDISH PLOT OF THE GHOST, A BOLT OF LIGHTNING STREAKED BLINDINGLY INTO THE ROOM, STRIKING THE WALL, AND HURLING THE CANVAS TO THE FLOOR"



"WITH HER LAST REMAINING STRENGTH, MADELEINE MANAGED TO PUSH PETER FROM HER..."

THE CANVAS! IF I DESTROY THE CANVAS!



KILL HER!

NOW! YOUR LAIR WILL BE DESTROYED! AND YOU SHALL BE CONSUMED WITH IT!



AAAAH! YOU AND ALL YOUR EVIL SHALL DISAPPEAR IN THE FIRE!



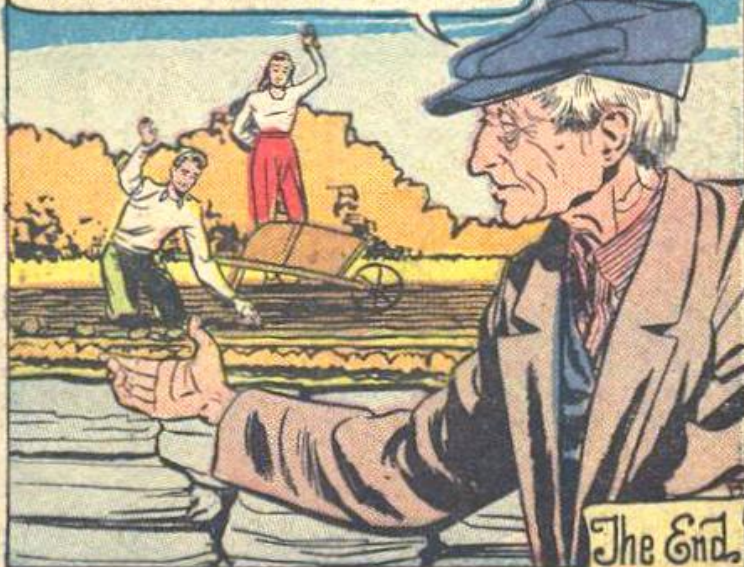
"WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GHOST, PETER WAS RELEASED FROM THE SPELL!"

MADELEINE-- WHAT HAPPENED? I-- I HAD A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE!

I KNOW, MY DARLING. BUT THERE IS NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF ANYMORE.



AND THAT'S THE STORY. THESE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE DEFEATED THE SINISTER EVIL THAT WOULD HAVE DESTROYED THEM. NOW, WHERE THERE WAS HATRED AND UNHAPPINESS, THERE IS ONLY LOVE AND JOY!



The End

TRUE TALES of the SUPERNATURAL

#2

THEN, ONE NIGHT IN 1903, A 13TH PRISONER TRIED TO HANG HERSELF IN IN THAT VERY SAME CELL!

ONLY THE SWIFT ACTION OF AN ALERT GUARD WHO CUT THE ROPE SAVED THE LIFE OF THE UNFORTUNATE GIRL...



"THERE WAS A SUDDEN FLASH OF LIGHT IN MY DARK CELL, AND I SAW THE GHOST OF OLD PEG GLARING AT ME..."

"HER EVIL VOICE WAS SO COMPELLING THAT I HAD NO WILL TO RESIST HER COMMANDS! I WAS TOLD TO TEAR STRIPS FROM MY DRESS AND FASHION A 'ROPE' WITH A NOOSE AT THE END!"



"I DID AS SHE COMMANDED ME! AND EVEN AS THE NOOSE TIGHTENED AROUND MY THROAT, I COULD HEAR HER EVIL LAUGHTER!"

"HA! HA! NO ONE SHALL LIVE IN THIS CELL! I DIED HERE, AND MY SPIRIT SHALL ABIDE HERE ETERNALLY! HA! HA!"



ONLY THIS YOUNG GIRL HAD HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL HER STORY ABOUT THE HORRIFYING APPEARANCE OF THE OLD LADY'S GHOST! AFTER THIS INCIDENT, THE CELL WAS DISCARDED, AND NEVER USED AGAIN TO HOUSE A PRISONER. DID SHE REALLY SEE THE GHOST, OR DID SHE ONLY IMAGINE IT? JUST ANOTHER UNEXPLAINED MYSTERY IN THE ANNALS OF THE SUPERNATURAL!





A FULL MOON RISES OVER THE VILLA DI PINI. A SHAFT OF SILVER PENETRATES THE HIDDEN CRYPT OF A MONSTER WHO HAS SLAIN THREE VICTIMS EVERY GENERATION FOR OVER 400 YEARS! A GLEAM OF LIGHT TOUCHES THE BLACK-CLAD CORPSE. IT STIRS. A RED TONGUE MOVES SLOWLY, HUNGRILY OVER DEMONISH LIPS, PARCHED FOR THE LIQUID THAT WILL SUSTAIN ITS FIENDISH LIFE FOR YET ANOTHER 25 YEARS. THE VAMPIRE OF THE VILLA DI PINI APPEARS IN THE MOONLIGHT-- IN ALL ITS HORRIFYING AWESOMENESS. NOR SHALL THE FIEND RETURN TO HIS HIDING PLACE TILL HE HAS DRAINED THE BLOOD FROM THE VEINS OF YET ANOTHER VICTIM!

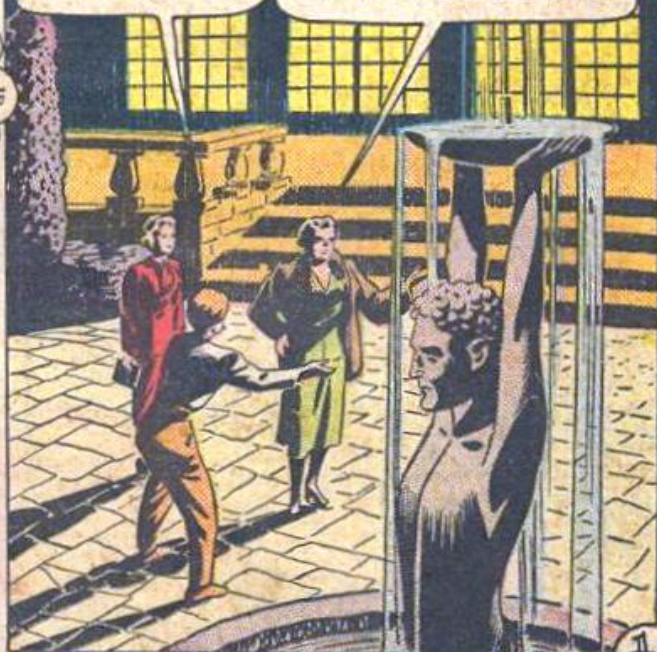
FOR FIFTEEN YEARS THE VILLA DI PINI HAS BEEN FOR SALE. AND NOW ITS PRICE WAS SUSPICIOUSLY LOW. TO SOME, THIS MAY HAVE SEEMED A BAD OMEN. BUT THE PASSION OF MRS. INA LORDE FOR SOUVENIR-COLLECTING SURPASSED ALL COMMON SENSE...

ROBERT WON'T LIKE THE IDEA. OF ALL THINGS TO BRING BACK FROM A EUROPEAN TRIP-- AN ITALIAN VILLA THAT ONCE BELONGED TO THE DI PINI FAMILY! REALLY, MOTHER!

YOUR HUSBAND DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HIS MONEY! I DO! WE'LL TAKE THE VILLA, LUIGI!

BUT--UH--YOU DID NOT TELL YOUR DAUGHTER ABOUT THE MENACE!

UTTER NONSENSE! A VAMPIRE BURIED SOMEWHERE ON THE PREMISES. FOOLISH SUPERSTITION!



NO, SIGNORA. THIS VAMPIRE IS **REAL**. IN 1545 NICOLA DI PINI MURDERED HIS WIFE. RATHER THAN SPEND HIS LIFE IN PRISON, HE TOOK POISON. A TRUSTED SERVANT IS SAID TO HAVE HIDDEN HIS BODY... AND IT WAS THIS SERVANT WHO BECAME THE FIRST VICTIM OF HIS MASTER, WHO HAD TURNED INTO A **VAMPIRE!**



AND EVEN NOW WITH EVERY NEW GENERATION-- ABOUT EVERY 25 YEARS-- THE VAMPIRE STIRS FROM HIS HIDING PLACE AND SEEKS A FEW VICTIMS TO REPLENISH HIS STRENGTH. I HAVE SEEN A DEAD ONE-- HIS THROAT PIERCED AS IF A BAT'S SHARP FANGS HAD BEEN AT WORK!



YOU MEAN, THIS VAMPIRE IS CONCEALED SOMEWHERE IN THE VILLA, AND WE'LL BE TAKING IT WITH US TO AMERICA?

I DON'T BELIEVE IN SUCH NONSENSE, ELINOR! WE'RE TAKING THE VILLA, LUIGI! GO TO WORK AT ONCE!



FAR AWAY FROM THE ANCIENT HILLS OF NORTHERN ITALY, A CABLEGRAM ARRIVES AT THE CLUB OF ROBERT KNOWLAND, YOUNG MILLIONAIRE...

SHIPPING AN ENTIRE ITALIAN VILLA TO AMERICA?

IT'S NOT ELINOR'S DOING, DOC. IT'S HER MOTHER. I KNOW ELINOR MARRIED ME FOR MY MONEY. BUT I LOVE HER, DOC. SOMEHOW, I FEEL, UNDERNEATH, SHE'D RETURN THAT LOVE IF NOT FOR THE WICKED AMBITIONS OF HER MOTHER!



MRS. LORDE DROVE HER HUSBAND TO BANKRUPTCY AND DEATH IN PRISON TO KEEP HER SATISFIED. SHE RAISED ELINOR WITH THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF MARRYING A RICH MAN SO THAT SHE COULD TAKE UP WHERE SHE LEFT OFF...

I KNOW ELINOR'S DOMINATED BY HER MOTHER-- BUT I'M TRUSTING IN ELINOR'S INNER LOVE FOR ME.



MEANWHILE, ACROSS THE SEA, AS THE FULL MOON SUFFUSES THE NIGHT WITH EERIE BEAUTY...

SORRY, SIGNORA. I CANNOT TAKE THE BOAT OUT. THE VAMPIRE MAY WALK TONIGHT!

WE CAN GO BOATING ON THE LAKE ANOTHER NIGHT, MOTHER.



NO! I'LL SHOW YOU MONEY IS MORE POWERFUL THAN SUPERSTITION!







(GASP!) T-THE
VAMPIRE!



EAAAA!

BUT LISTEN
HOW HE'S
SCREAMING!
SOMETHING
TERRIBLE
MUST'VE
HAPPENED!

THE IDIOT
PROBABLY
TRIPPED
OVER HIS
OWN SHADOW!
LET'S GO
BACK TO
THE INN!



THE FOLLOWING DAY NEAR THE
LAKE-SHORE...

IT'S
HORRIBLE!

PROBABLY
SOME WILD ANIMAL
ATTACKED HIM!



LATER... FORGET THE
KILLING,
ELINOR. THINK ABOUT
LIVING IN THIS BEAUTIFUL
VILLA BACK HOME!

NOTHING ABOUT
THIS VILLA IS
BEAUTIFUL. IT'S
REPULSIVE --
FRIGHTENING!
I'M SORRY I
EVER SAW IT!

**MONTHS LATER, AS THE VILLA ACHIEVES
VIRTUAL REINCARNATION ON THE BANKS OF
AN AMERICAN RIVER...**

BUT IF YOU WERE AFRAID
OF THIS VAMPIRE LEGEND,
WHY DID YOU BUY THE
HOUSE?

MOTHER INSISTED!
OH, WHY DO YOU KEEP
ASKING ME QUES-
TIONS? IF YOU DON'T
LIKE WHAT I DO,
LEAVE ME!



BUT I LOVE YOU, ELINOR. YOU'D RE-
TURN THAT LOVE IF YOU COULD ONLY
BREAK AWAY FROM YOUR MOTHER.
WHAT IS THIS HOLD SHE HAS OVER
YOU?

HOW DARE YOU TURN MY
DAUGHTER AGAINST ME?
GET OUT OF THIS HOUSE!
GET OUT!



SHE HAS NO RIGHT TO MAKE ROBERT
LEAVE. HE PAID FOR THIS VILLA.

THIS TERRACE,
THIS BEAUTI-
FUL FOUNTAIN
OF YOUTH! I'M
GOING TO WALK
AROUND AND DRINK
IN ALL THIS
INTOXICATING
BEAUTY!

HOW CAN HE LOVE
ME AFTER THE
SHABBY WAY
I'VE TREATED
HIM?

**AND AS MRS. LORDE
WALKS AND EXULTS,
THE FULL MOON GROWS
BRIGHTER AND BLOODIER
-- TILL THE MOONBEAMS
THEMSELVES TURN INTO
REDDENED GOLD...**



AT THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH, A CRACK APPEARS IN THE STATUE. AN EVER WIDENING OPENING...



A HAIRY HAND, WITH LONG CLAW-LIKE NAILS COMES FORTH...



AND THEN THE KIND OF FACE ONE SEES ONLY IN NIGHTMARES...



BUT THIS IS NO DREAM. MRS. LORDE SHRINKS FROM THE BAT-LIKE SHAPE. HER EYES WIDEN WITH HORROR. A STIFLED SCREAM IS CHOKED OFF...



THE NEXT MORNING, THE LIFELESS BODY IS FOUND BY THE GARDENER...



THE NEXT DAY, AFTER THE FUNERAL...

I TRIED TO MAKE THE FUNERAL, ELINOR, BUT MY PLANE WAS GROUNDED IN BOSTON. I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR MOTHER. BUT I'M WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU. WHETHER THERE'S ANYTHING TO THIS VAMPIRE LEGEND OR NOT, I WANT YOU OUT OF HERE!



YOU THINK THAT? YOUR MOTHER'S UNHOLY INFLUENCE HAS BECOME SO MUCH A PART OF YOU, YOU'VE EVEN BEGUN TO THINK LIKE HER!

LET GO OF ME! I WON'T GO! YOU CAN'T MAKE ME!



Y-YOU STABBED ME!

YOU DROVE ME TO IT. NOW GET OUT! AND DON'T EVER COME BACK! I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU EVER AGAIN!



AT DOC BREWER'S OFFICE...

DO I BELIEVE IN VAMPIRES? NO. BUT MANY STRANGE THINGS HAPPEN THAT CAN'T BE EXPLAINED AWAY BY SCIENCE. SHE'S BUT I'D WORRY STILL UNDER HER MORE ABOUT MOTHER'S INFLUENCE. ELINOR'S BEHAVIOR. I MUST BE AT THE VILLA DI PINI THE NEXT NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON. I DON'T DARE LEAVE HER ALONE, VAMPIRE OR NO VAMPIRE!



THE MONTH PASSES SWIFTLY. THEN, ONE NIGHT...

WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG, DOC? YOU KNOW I WANTED TO BE AT THE VILLA IN TIME FOR THE FULL MOON. COULDN'T HELP IT, BOB. MY PATIENT WAS PRETTY LOW. HAD TO GIVE HIM GLUCOSE INTRAVENOUSLY. THAT TAKES TIME. STOW THIS TRANSFUSION APPARATUS IN THE BACK OF YOUR CAR.



AT THE VILLA, A FIGURE OUT OF THE PAST STALKS SILENTLY TOWARD THE LIBRARY, A FIGURE NEITHER DEAD NOR ALIVE... AND ALL THE MORE HORRIBLE FOR IT!

STRANGE. I THOUGHT I HEARD A SOUND ON THE TERRACE. THE SERVANTS WENT OFF FOR THE NIGHT...



MOMENTS LATER, OUTSIDE...

THAT'S ODD. THAT STATUE IS OPEN. IS IT SUPPOSED TO BE HOLLOW? Elinor! LISTEN! A SCREAM! IT'S ELINOR!



IF THAT FIEND'S KILLED HER, I'LL KILL HIM WITH MY BARE HANDS! NO, BOB! DON'T GO NEAR HIM! HE'S NOT HUMAN. NOBODY CAN FIGHT A VAMPIRE WITH MORTAL WEAPONS! TAKE THIS MIRROR. THE IMAGE OF HIMSELF IS SUPPOSED TO DRIVE HIM AWAY!





SCIENCE WORKS ITS MIRACLE! MINUTES LATER, AS LIFE-GIVING BLOOD STREAMS IN A SUSTAINING FLOW FROM HUSBAND TO WIFE...



ROBERT KNOWLAND APPROACHES THE HALF-OPEN STATUE. HIS MUSCULAR ARM DRAWS BACK. THE SPEAR IS HURLED!



UNBURIED DEAD

I must sit down and write out these notes before it is too late. What you are about to read may sound completely incredible to you, but believe me, there are things existing in this life of ours which no one can comprehend and yet they are here among us. So I ask you to keep an open mind as you read this account of my beloved Helen, who left her body willingly, but couldn't get back. And her body became an unwilling corpse.

True I am only an amateur in the art of hypnotism, but an amateur can learn many forbidden things from the pondering of forgotten books. Perhaps I did skim lightly the pages that gave the check for that horrible experiment. Perhaps—perhaps my mind was not strong enough. Though I do not believe that—for how could I have willed the hideous thing to happen?

True! I did not mean it as it seemed. It must have been the wording of that terrible command.

It is eleven-thirty. Speed is necessary to complete these notes . . .

I had been experimenting with Helen for many months. She trusted me implicitly. And why shouldn't she? I loved her dearly, and she loved me.

After the first month of nightly experiments, she had no control over the matter. I could hypnotize her at will by merely willing it. So how can anyone say my mind is not strong? Strong, and sane. Definitely sane. In fact, too sane, too strong. If mine were a weaker mind, this astral nightmare might never have been a reality.

I was visiting Helen at her little cottage close to my home. Soon we would be married. With her golden, drowsy head upon my shoulder, we talked of the wonderful times we would have. Well, not actually talked—we used words, no sounds. Some call it telepathy. But still, it wasn't that; although the idea was the same.

I would hypnotize Helen, then raise her from sleep until she was on the verge of waking, and hold her there. Then, slightly hypnotizing myself, we could converse freely and tirelessly. Our thoughts belonged to each other.

During one lapse in our thought-conversation, I remembered reading an ancient Persian book about an astral-body experiment. I remembered then, as I sadly do now, that I had never finished the volume. In fact, translating Iranian is so laborious for me that I had only studied the method for releasing the astral-body.

I willed Helen to sit up and carefully mind my thoughts. I told her to close her eyes, and picture in her brain the room about her. To picture before her

closed lids the position of the furniture, and the lamps; the discarded book on the floor, and myself.

A few moments passed while she struggled with this new and unusual command. But soon she saw the room clearly and could even through closed lids note the movement of a light curtain as it rustled with a faint breeze. I was exultant, and commanded her to gaze carefully about, without moving her body, until she felt a lightness; and then to arise.

A minute or two passed in silence. A heavy silence that I should have noted as the foreboding of doom. But I was much too interested to sense such things.

Finally she thought, "Now what do I do?"

I told her to arise as I had commanded.

"But I have," she thought.

Helen was still sitting on the couch. Her eyes were closed, and her full regular breathing rustled her dress. Her hands rested gently on her abdomen. But her mind had risen to float in the air beside me. The experiment was a success!

I told her to turn and look at the couch. But hardly had the thoughts formed in my mind when a frightful change came over the shell that sat there. I knew it wasn't Helen, for her mind beside me sought a question.

The lids of Helen's eyes opened ponderously, as though the mind that controlled them wasn't sure of its power. Then the eyes, shockingly wise, and age-old, gazed up at me evilly, as though they could see Helen's shrieking mind. Shrieking questions—then pleading and begging me to give her back her body.

For a moment my dazed mind didn't grasp what had happened. Then I realized that a homeless wandering earth-spirit had found what he sought, a vacant body—a body with life, but no mind—and had entered it! Helen's body!

He was an old and evil spirit. And as I pleaded with him to leave, he laughed. Laughed mockingly! And I became mad and threatened him, and still he laughed. A triumphant cackle.

Perhaps I did go a little mad then. But who wouldn't who had to view the terrifying things that followed?

Helen's graceful hands twitched spasmodically, as a dope-fiend crazed for the want of drugs, and her pretty mouth, drooling and mouthing, choked sacrilegious invocations.

In the semi-gloom of the room it seemed that Helen's cheeks became hollow and sunken, and that the cheekbones rose. Dark lines appeared under her eyes and spread rapidly about the hollows of her face.

The eyes in the deep-sinking sockets became brighter and brighter, until I was certain they would burst into flame. Their brilliance seemed to add light to the hot room. Helen's lips twisted in a mocking smile, and suddenly I noted that her face was becoming black and aged. Then her golden hair was turning to platinum—to a glowing silver . . .

Within five minutes Helen had become an old woman!

But the transformation had not been finished. The brilliance in her eyes remained, but was dulled a bit as the eyes closed slightly and rose at their corners in an oriental slant. The face became young and beautiful in Asiatic type, almost cherubic, but the dark tint, like deep tan, remained. It spread quickly over Helen's throat and stopped there. As though an invisible hand had drawn a mystic line of demarcation about the base of the column, the spreading ceased. Helen's head had changed to that of a young pale-haired oriental.

Helen's lush body rose jerkily. Her innocent blue eyes, now mocking and inviting, were flecked with blood; and in their black depths was triumph over death.

Yet Helen's mind still floated beside me. Her spirit still sobbed and pleaded in my brain while the demon gained control over her body!

From the depths of Helen's throat came a soft inviting purr, and her lips quivered questioningly. I backed around a table as the nightmare approached. The demon became angry and hastened after me with a hideous rolling stride that caused Helen's body to quiver convulsively. With a triumphant roar the demon leaped upon me and we crashed to the floor. I thrust the horror away with a quick motion and leaped to my feet. The demon snarled and rose to a low crouch. Like an offensive snake, coiled and tensed, sure of its victim, Helen's body crept after me.

Suddenly I knew what to do. I commanded the demon to leave Helen's body or I would destroy him. A mocking purr came from the oriental lips, and the eyes flashed dangerously. He and I both knew that I had no control over his mind.

I side-stepped as the demon lunged, and warned the horror that I still had control over Helen's body. Though Helen's mind was gone, the body from long association with my commands would obey me. It would obey my suggestions even more fully now than when resisted by Helen's subconscious mind.

But still the demon advanced.

So I acted. I commanded the nerves of Helen's body to repel the intruder. The exact words I do not remember. I meant that the body should cease action, and disregard the commands of the demon. But in the nervousness of the moment, I forgot the complete control I had over Helen's poor body. What I meant, and what I said were two different things.

Helen's body took my words literally! Suddenly, a

horrifying change came upon her flesh. It bloated and split in a thousand places. The flesh became a flood of seeping blood. Her body was not only expelling the intruder, but its entire nervous system as well!

It was all over in a moment. There was nothing I could do. As the blood poured away I could see poor Helen's frightful face—a network of fine red lines. Her exposed nerves ran about her flesh like a surrealist dream of feeling.

It's ten minutes to twelve now. Not much time is left. They say I had blood on my hands. Of course I had blood on my hands. Didn't I weep over her poor ruptured body an hour before I called the police? I loved her madly. Perhaps I was out of my mind, for I remember in my madness that I tried all sorts of artificial respiration—anything to revive my shattered love. Perhaps I was mad to do that—anyone could see that she was dead.

Even Helen seems to feel my tenseness as the hour draws near. "Thomas. Thomas!" her mind cries in my brain. "Any body will do, Thomas. You could get me another body—that of a newborn child."

But how can I do what my beloved Helen desires? I am powerless!

They said at the trial that I had murdered my Helen in a manner unknown. I tried to explain, but they wouldn't believe my story. They called me mad! Momentarily insane, yes. I know I was—that's how I got that blood on my hands.

But I didn't kill her! It was a horrible mistake. Why should I kill her? Murder my love? It is all a dream; it must be! This couldn't happen . . .

Two minutes to twelve . . .

I hear their steps in the hall. Echoing gloomily on the cold walls. It will be a relief. True! If I were free, I could find a body for Helen whose shrieking thoughts now madden and torment me. She knows! She knows she is doomed to life everlasting. Life forever in a limbo between light and shadow. But what can I do?

What can I do! What can I do? I know. I have it! Why didn't I think of it before? Nothing to it! Yes, it dooms *me* too, but . . .

Midnight . . .

They are at the door now. Those hated men who will make certain that the laws of an ignorant court shall hang me by the neck until dead. They are fumbling with the lock. I have a few moments: barely enough—but I can do it. I can do it! I've hypnotized myself numerous times. Only a second is necessary. Merely dropping to sleep—as easy as that—and picturing the room. This cell, about me, and rising . . .

In a moment I will be with Helen. Perhaps our astral bodies can find new homes, and live forever and ever with immortal peace and love.

THE END

No Grave to Hold Him

"I AM DYING OF AN INCURABLE DISEASE. UPON MY DEATH, MY WORK IN ADVANCED ATOMIC RESEARCH WILL BE POSTPONED FOREVER. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO IMPART MY INSIGHT AND WISDOM TO ANOTHER, AND SO— RATHER THAN LET MY BRAIN PERISH WITH MY BODY, I HEREBY PERMIT DR. ADAMS, MY CO-WORKER, TO ATTEMPT AN OPERATION WHEREBY MY BRAIN MAY BE KEPT ALIVE IN A BODY DR. ADAMS HAS CONSTRUCTED FROM SECTIONS OF OTHER CADAVERS. DR. ADAMS WILL SEEK TO ANIMATE THE BODY OF THIS CREATURE WITH AN ATOMIC SHOCK. TO THIS EXPERIMENT, AND TO THE CONTROL OF MY MIND THROUGH DR. ADAMS' BRAIN-WAVE RHEOSTAT, I GIVE MY ENTIRE APPROVAL. MAY HE SUCCEED IN KEEPING MY BRAIN ALIVE SO THAT I MAY FOLLOW IN DEATH THE SCIENTIFIC IDEAL TO WHICH I HAVE DEDICATED MY LIFE!

(SIGNED) PROF. ALFRED VANCE "

THERE... THE PAPER IS SIGNED. NOW I CAN DIE IN PEACE. PROMISE ME ONE THING, ALAN. THE WORLD MUST NEVER KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE TILL MY WORK IS FINISHED.

IT WON'T. SH, PROFESSOR, HERE COMES YOUR GRAND-DAUGHTER.

TWO MEN TO SEE YOU DOWNSTAIRS, ALAN.



WE'RE PALS OF ACE BROGAN, DOC. ACE WAS EXECUTED LAST WEEK, AN' BEIN' AS NOBODY CLAIMED HIS BODY, WE HEAR THE PRISON GAVE IT TO YOU.

WE WANT ACE'S BODY BACK, DOC... WITH ANY PAPERS HE HAD ON HIM!

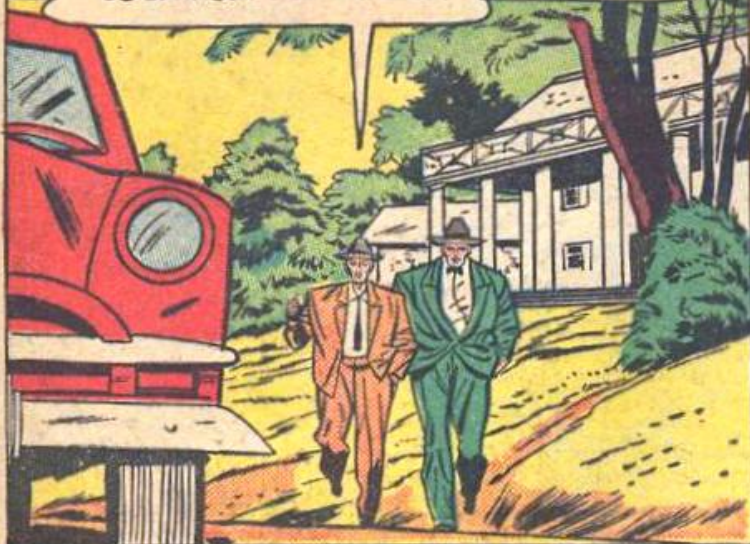


YOU'RE TOO LATE. I BURNED WHATEVER PAPERS I FOUND. AND THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF ACE BROGAN'S BODY THAT'S RECOGNIZABLE. AND NOW— EXCUSE ME, I HAVE WORK TO DO.

SURE, DOC... SURE!



HE MIGHT BE HOLDIN' OUT ON US, EDDIE. MAYBE ACE *DID* WRITE DOWN WHERE HE HID THE DOUGH - AN' THIS DOC FOUND THE PAPER. THE DOC'S SMART. HE WOULDN'T TELL US WHERE \$200,000 IS BURIED! WE'LL COME BACK TONIGHT AND LOOK FOR THE PAPERS.



THAT NIGHT...

HE'S DEAD, DULCIE! IT'S A PITY GREAT MEN LIKE YOUR GRANDFATHER CAN'T LIVE FOREVER!

DULCIE, I MUST BE ALONE IN THE LABORATORY TONIGHT WITH YOUR GRANDFATHER'S BODY. THERE'S SOMETHING HE WANTED ME TO DO. IT WAS HIS LAST WISH.



SO HOURS LATER, IN THE LABORATORY...

IT'S NOT A PRETTY BODY, PROFESSOR. TOO BAD THE ONLY BODIES I COULD GET WERE EXECUTED CRIMINALS LIKE ACE BROGAN.



IRONIC, ISN'T IT, THAT YOUR GREAT MIND SHOULD BE AT THE MERCY OF THIS BRAIN-WAVE RHEOSTAT? PUSH IT TOWARD "BRAIN" AND ALL HOMICIDAL WILL IS NULLIFIED. PUSH IT DOWN TOWARD "BODY" AND CRIMINAL DESIRES PREDOMINATE. YES, THIS IS ONE OF THE PRICES WE MUST PAY FOR THE SURVIVAL OF YOUR BRAIN!



AND SO DR. ADAMS BEGINS THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE GENIUS' BRAIN TO A MONSTER'S BODY...



AS THE NIGHT WEARS ON, TWO FIGURES RANSACK THE HOUSE FOR A SHRED OF PAPER THAT MEANS \$200,000...

LOOK! A PAPER SIGNED BY PROFESSOR VANCE. THIS DR. ADAMS IS GOIN' TO PUT THE PROFESSOR'S BRAIN INTO A BODY MADE UP OF STIFFS LIKE ACE BROGAN! THEN ATOMIC POWER IS SUPPOSED TO SHOCK THE THING INTO LIFE!



MOMENTS LATER, IN THE LABORATORY...

IT'S ON THE LEVEL! THERE'S ADAMS!

WOW! THAT MONSTER'D MAKE FRANKENSTEIN LOOK BEAUTIFUL!



NOW FOR THE SHOCK! IF ONLY THE PROFESSOR'S MIND CAN LIVE AGAIN AND THINK FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND!



THE EYES, THEY'RE OPENIN'! THE MOUTH'S M-MOVIN'!



SPEAK TO ME, PROFESSOR! I'VE SUBDUED THE BODILY INSTINCTS THROUGH THE RHEOSTAT. THE LEVER IS PUSHED FORWARD TOWARD "BRAIN"!



KEEP THE LEVER THAT WAY, ALAN. HAD WE NOT TAKEN EVERY PRECAUTION AND CONSTRUCTED THAT BRAIN-WAVE RHEOSTAT TO GUARANTEE THE POWER OF THE BRAIN OVER THE BODY, OUR EXPERIMENT WOULD HAVE PERPETRATED A CATASTROPHE! WE HAVE CREATED A HORRIBLE MONSTER!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, PROFESSOR?



WE HAVE GIVEN LIFE TO ACE BROGAN'S GLANDULAR SYSTEM! MY BRAIN IS IMPRISONED IN A BODY WITH THE STRENGTH OF TEN BRUTES! IF THAT RHEOSTAT LEVER IS EVER PUSHED THE OTHER WAY, ALAN - MY BRAIN WILL BE POWERLESS TO CONTROL THE VILENESS THAT WILL BE RELEASED.

DID YOU HEAR THAT? GRAB THE RHEOSTAT, EDDIE!



STAY PUT, DOC!

I'M SHOVIN' THE LEVER DOWN! IF ACE BROGAN LIVES AGAIN, HE CAN TAKE US TO THE HIDIN' PLACE OF THE \$200,000 HE BURIED SIX MONTHS AGO!



ANOTHER LOOK IS COMING INTO HIS FACE! TURN THE LEVER BACK, YOU FOOLS!

SORRY, DOC, IT'S OUR TURN TO EXPERIMENT! ACE, THIS IS YOUR OLD PAL, EDDIE! GIVE THIS DOC A GOIN' OVER! HE'S IN OUR WAY!

N-NO! NO!

LIFTED HIM LIKE HE WAS A FEATHER!





TALK TO HIM, CHICK, BEFORE HE GOES FOR US!

ACE, LISTEN! WE'RE YOUR OLD PALS—EDDIE AN' CHICK! WE DIDN'T DITCH YOU THE NIGHT YOU BURIED THE DOUGH AN' GOT NAILED BY THE COPS!



THE COPS CUT US OFF! WE COULDN'T GET BACK TO HELP YOU! ACE, DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE YOU HID THE PAY-ROLL WE HEISTED? THE \$200,000? OF COURSE I REMEMBER!

HE WANTS US TO FOLLOW HIM! GO AHEAD, ACE! TAKE US TO THE DOUGH! WHILE WE GOT THE RHEOSTAT, NOBODY CAN SWITCH YOU BACK TO BEIN' A PROFESSOR!



SHORTLY AFTER, AS THE UP-ROAR AWAKENS DULCIE...

BUT, ALAN, WHY CAN'T YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED?

BECAUSE IT'S TOO GHASTLY, DULCIE! I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I FIND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR!



AN HOUR LATER, NEAR THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN...

HE'S POINTIN' AT THE LANDIN' FIELD! HE BURIED THE DOUGH HERE! (GROAN!) AN' THEY JUST BUILT AN AIR-STRIP OVER THE HIDIN' PLACE!

IF I GAVE ACE SOME OF THE PROFESSOR'S BRAINS, HE COULD FIGURE OUT THE LOCATION, ANYWAY. I'LL SHOVE THE BRAIN-WAVE LEVER UP A NOTCH!

THE TREES I USED FOR MARKERS WERE CUT DOWN!



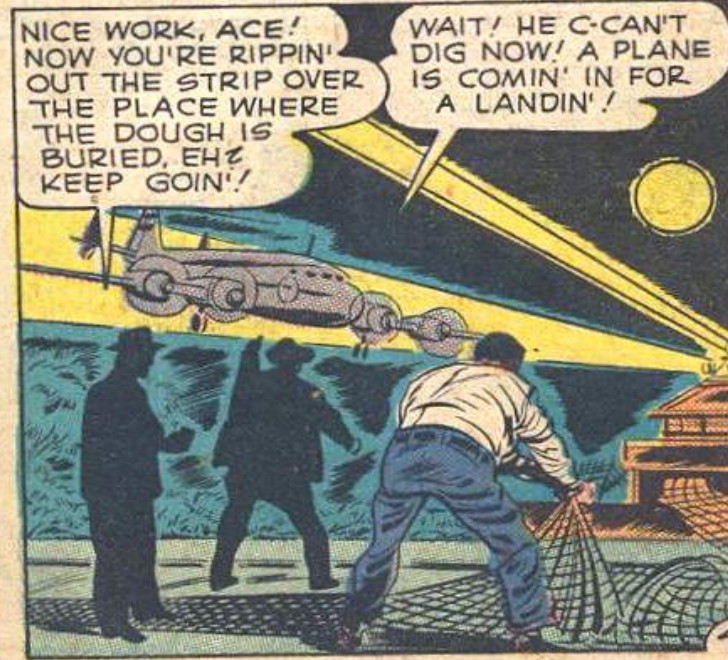
HE'S WRITIN' SOMETHIN' ON THE BACK OF AN ENVELOPE! ALL KINDS OF FIGURES AN' FORMULAS.

HEY! WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE? WHAT ARE YOU MEN DOING OUT HERE ON THIS AIR STRIP?



THAT'S IT, ACE! THROW HIM AWAY!

N-NO! LET ME DOWN! YIIEEE!



NICE WORK, ACE! NOW YOU'RE RIPPIN' OUT THE STRIP OVER THE PLACE WHERE THE DOUGH IS BURIED, EH? KEEP GOIN'!

WAIT! HE C-CAN'T DIG NOW! A PLANE IS COMIN' IN FOR A LANDIN'!



IT WENT INTO THE HOLE THE MONSTER RIPPED OUT OF THE STRIP.

THAT ENDS OUR DIGGIN' FOR THE NIGHT! WE'LL HIDE OUT SOMEWHERE AN' COME BACK TOMORROW WHEN THE EXCITEMENT IS OVER.



THE NEXT DAY, THE TORMENTED DR. ADAMS READS BEHIND THE HEADLINES, BUT IS POWERLESS TO ASK FOR HELP...

THE POLICE MIGHT SHOOT HIM! THE PROFESSOR'S MIND WOULD BE LOST FOREVER. I MUST BE AT THAT AIR STRIP, IN CASE THE MONSTER AND ITS MASTERS RETURN.

MYSTERIOUS SABOTAGE AT AIRPORT STRIP TORN UP. PLANE CRACKS UP. 9 INJURED.

AIRPORT GUARD HURT. CLAIMS GIANT MONSTER NAMED ACE IS ON THE LOOSE IN COMPANY WITH TWO MEN.

PROF. VANCE, NOTED SCIENTIST BURIED TODAY



THAT NIGHT, BACK AT THE AIR FIELD...

CHICK, LOOK! HE FOUND THE DOUGH! THAT'S YOUR OLD VALISE. IT'S GOT YOUR INITIALS ON IT!

GOOD! NOW LET'S BUMP OFF THE MONSTER BEFORE HE MAKES TROUBLE FOR US!

GOOD HEAVENS! THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HIM!



DON'T SHOOT, YOU FOOLS! HE'S A GENIUS! HE CAN BENEFIT MANKIND! GIVE ME THAT RHEOSTAT!

SO THE DOUBLE-CROSSERS WERE GOING TO SHOOT ME!



H-HE'S GOT ME! HE'LL KILL ME! YIIIIIIII!

LOOK OUT! THE RHEO-STAT!



N-NO, MONSTER! DON'T KILL HIM!

IT'S NO USE! I CAN'T CONTROL HIM! I'VE GOT TO USE THE RHEOSTAT!

URGHHHH!



GOOD GRIEF! THE RHEOSTAT JAMMED WHEN IT FELL! IT'S USELESS!

D-DON'T KILL ME, ACE! IT WAS EDDIE'S IDEA DOUBLE-CROSSIN' YOU! I-I SAID-GIVE THE MONSTER HIS SHARE! YOU GOTTA BELIEVE ME, ACE!

LOOK OUT! THAT AIRPLANE'S COMING DOWN! YOU'RE RUNNING RIGHT INTO IT!



YIIIIAAAA!



THE LEVER! (GASP!) I-I STILL CAN'T MOVE IT EITHER WAY! THE MONSTER IS ON ITS OWN! I... OWWWWW!



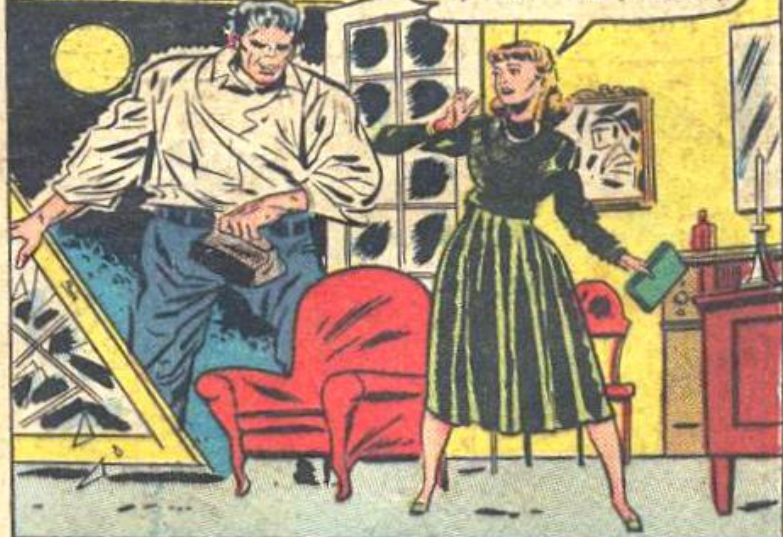
SOON, AS AN EXCITED CROWD GATHERS AT THE SCENE OF THE MONSTER'S REVENGE...

THE MONSTER'S DISAPPEARED! THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO TRAIL HIM UNTIL THIS RHEOSTAT IS FIXED. I MUST RETURN TO THE LABORATORY AND GET THE PROPER TOOLS!



BUT THE MONSTER, OBEYING THE MOST PRIMITIVE INSTINCT IN ALL BEASTS, FINDS ITS WAY BACK TO THE ONLY HOME IT'S EVER KNOWN...

OH! STAY AWAY FROM ME! HELP!



DULCIE! GOOD HEAVENS! THE MONSTER'S HERE!



DULCIE, QUICK! I-I CAN'T FIGHT HIM! THERE'S A HYPO FULL OF CHLORAL HYDRATE IN THE MEDICINE CABINET! GIVE IT TO ME!... (GASP!)



WITH ONLY SECONDS TO SPARE, THE DOCTOR JABS THE HYPO INTO THE MONSTER'S ARM...





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All you have to do is write a letter of 150 words or less and tell us which story you liked best, which you liked second best and which you liked third best, and why.



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3rd PRIZE		3.00
4th PRIZE		2.00



Follow these rules carefully - and your letter may be a prize winner! Letters to be no longer than 150 words; give your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice of stories in the magazine; give your name, address, and age; tell us what other magazines you read regularly. The judges' decision will be final. Duplicate awards will be made in case of ties. All entries must be postmarked no later than August 14, 1950.

Address: Contest Editor, Challenge of the Unknown, 23 W. 47th St., New York 19



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